



Election Modernization Committee

Tuesday, August 24, 2021

7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Conducted by Remote Participation

Minutes

Attendance: Greg Dennis, Juli Brazile, Maxwell Palmer, Len Diggins, Walter Horn, Jennifer Susse, Don Seltzer, Juhan Sonin, Paul Parravano, Giovanna DeStefanis, Lesley Waxman, Patti Muldoon, Bill Logan, Beth Melofchik, Robin Bergman, Jo Anne Preston, Lynette Culverhouse, Rebecca Gruber

1. Executive Order on Remote Participation

Greg welcomed everyone and reviewed the Governor's Order for remote participation.

2. Draft Minutes for Review, Edits, and Approval - Tue, July 20, 2021

Minutes approved with small corrections.

3. Letter to Secretary of State about AutoMARK terminals

Letter drafted by Paul, signed by Greg, and emailed to the Elections Division last week. Paul will follow up after Labor Day as indicated in the letter. He will reach out to the Disability Commissions in Cambridge and Watertown for a joint meeting on the issue as part of any meeting with Secretary Galvin. The Disability Law Center in Boston could help with strategies for a meeting with Galvin.

4. Status of Home Rule Petitions

Greg reported on two articles. The TMM Election Consolidation passed by STM 2020. The Joint Committee on Elections held a hearing and

Sean Garballey reports it went well. He expects a vote this fall. The Ranked Choice Voting article passed by ATM 2021 has been reviewed by House Counsel who recommends modest grammatical edits. Sean will file it shortly and he believes it is possible for this to be approved this fall as well.

5. Reprecincting Outreach

Patti updated the committee on the planning to date. The Outreach Planning Team has set a goal that the re-precincting process should fairly represent all residents. Intend to have one public forum using Zoom. They recommend the Re-Precincting Working Group prepare short PSA videos on process and Jill Harvey (DEI) and Kelly Lynema (Planning) will do one on equity issues as we review the map. Broad public outreach is important and may include ACMI interviews, Town PR as usual, Open House to review maps in person and make comments on maps.

Zoom Forum planned with breakout groups to ask for feedback about specific areas on the map or the number of precincts. Polling locations may not be the focus at this stage since the Select Board can revise that at any time. The October deadline to finalize precincts is time-critical. Planning the Forum envisions 2 facilitators for each breakout group - discussion facilitator and tech facilitator to monitor chat, etc. Chat will be set to allow people to raise issues with the host, but not allow for public discussion among breakout members. In order to ensure facilitators are not responsible for accurately reporting comments we will provide the link to the Google Form for Comments at the end of the event.

Proposed Dates: Sept 22 or Sept 20. Anyone who can help with facilitating or outreach should email Patti. Several community members attending the meeting said they would be able to help with suggestions and lists. Juli updated re: the timeline with Select Board. They will hold a hearing the week of September 13 that will likely focus only on the number of precincts. The sooner the Board can vote on that number the more efficient the rest of the map work can be. The week after our Forum the Select Board will discuss and likely vote on the number of precincts and then determine next steps for reviewing maps. That timeline will determine a date when we will close comments.

Jennifer added the Google form will allow people to comment if they can't attend the hearings. September focus is on the boundaries and the number of precincts. Select Board can deal with specifics on precinct locations in the future.

Patti moved that the Public Outreach Team conduct outreach including a public forum along the basic plan as outlined and in coordination with the Clerk's Office and LWVA. Lesley 2nd. Passed unanimously. Patti will email EMC members with specific requests to sign up as facilitators.

6. Voting Reform Costs

Juli reviewed the various spending categories for Elections. The document summarizes at a very high level and is an attempt to capture items included in multiple department budgets. Walter suggested postponing further discussion until Adam Badik can be with us again. Question: Why do we pay separately for the police detail rather than assuming it's part of their regular routine? Answer: Detail work is outside the normal patrol schedule. Patti suggests adding a line item for training poll workers and is confused by the different pay structures for early voting and election day workers. Will the Town continue to pay for meals? Juhan would like to see rough totals for an election and the cost/voter and cost/eligible voters. Juli clarified this is not an attempt to cut costs, but rather to understand the costs of reforms or new services like early voting and build them into future budgets. The goal is to provide more service for the same dollars.

7. Youth Voting Engagement

Juhan was not able to convene the small group yet, but they will soon. No update at this time.

8. Public Comment and/or Questions

Beth Melofchik, Don Seltzer, Jo Anne Preston, Lynette Culverhouse and Robin Bergman commented regarding their concerns about reprecincting and the need to engage more Arlington residents in elections. Several items were proposed for consideration by EMC.

- Barriers to voting and reasons for low turnout in local elections.

- Barriers to running for office. Cost of campaigning and having to run two years in a row if seated for one year.
- Voter fatigue if there are too many names on the ballot.

9. New Business

Walter corrects the misperception that the spreadsheet was about cutting costs. EMC has no interest in reducing the cost of elections. Efficiency is fine.

Len reports that Envision Arlington Civic Engagement Group will do outreach to TMMs and encourage precinct meetings occur earlier this fall to discuss reprecincting.

Greg raises a question whether it's "fair" to have only some TMMs run again while other precincts proceed as normal.

Jennifer proposed future discussion about the number and location of polling places. Problems at some locations were noted when EMC participated in the Envision Arlington Survey and a recommendation from EMC to the Select Board could be called for.

10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:54

Next Meeting: Sept 14th at 8:00 pm

ATTACHED: Public Outreach Team Proposal

Reprecincting Public Outreach Team – Notes from First Meeting

8/23/2021 Meeting Attendees

Patti Muldoon – EMC & LWVA, facilitator and note taker

Juli Brazile – Town Clerk & EMC & Reprecincting Working Group

Jennifer Susse – EMC & Envision Arlington's Civic Engagement

Len Diggins – EMC, Select Board & Envision Arlington's Civic Engagement

Carolyn Parsons – LWVA

Our Goal in Adjusting the Town's Precincts TO FAIRLY REPRESENT ALL RESIDENTS OF ARLINGTON

Meeting Goal:

To enable public input by developing a proposal for methods of outreach which will include at least one public forum.

WHO

1. The Election Modernization Committee with League of Women Voters of Arlington and Envision Arlington will lead the efforts. Note: ten years ago there was very little public input into revising precinct lines. Then maybe twenty people gave input to the Town Manager. But this time we are discussing reducing the number of precincts, so the need for public input is greater.

2. Town Decision Makers: The Select Board makes this decision. They will base their decision on the proposal which will be submitted by the Town Reprecincting Working Group, staffed by Juli Brazile, Town Clerk, Kelly Lineman, Planning Dept., Adam Kurowski, former GIS Dir & now volunteer, and Jill Harvey, Diversity Dir.

3. People Affected by Decision: All residents, not just voters. We need to consider lead times for newsletters and try to reach out ASAP. Juli offered to track down whatever group lists the Town has. Initial category of groups to be contacted:

- Town Meeting Members
- School lists of parents (Jennifer)
- Seniors including Council on Aging and Housing Authority tenant assocs.
- East Arlington Local Streets (Len)
- All Town committees, such as Rainbow Commission, Transportation Advisory Committees (Len)
- Faith communities (Patti)
- Election workers (Carolyn)

WHEN

This year the timeline is extraordinarily tight. The 2020 Census still hasn't finalized the Town's population data, although some numbers have been submitted. The State usually redefines district lines after municipalities redraw precinct lines, but this year they may

redistrict first. The firm deadline for MA municipal precinct maps to be set is Oct. 30, however the Select Board's scheduled meeting is Oct. 25. Len will email us if that changes.

WHAT

We will ask for feedback about:

1. Number of precincts – 16 or 21
2. Map-specific concerns (this area shouldn't be split or apartment building, etc.)
3. *No discussion about voters' preference for their polling location*

HOW

- A. Public Service Videos (3 min goal)
 1. Juli will make one about the process and coordinate with
 2. Jill and Kelly, who will make one about the equity model
- B. Cable (Didn't discuss who would speak with ACMI)
 1. James Milan could interview Juli (and others if he wants)
 2. Arlington Public News could do one or more stories on the process
- C. Websites: Town, LWVA, ACMI, other
- D. Open House: Town Clerk's office and volunteers will staff a conference room on a Thursday for residents to comment in person (volunteers sought)
- E. Other Media and Email lists: Arlington Advocate, social media, etc. not discussed
- F. Public Forum

PUBLIC FORUM

1. Time constraints limit us to one public forum, which will be recorded.
2. We can start with the PSA videos.
3. The forum will be run by this group, suggesting that less than a quorum of Select Board be in attendance. Preferably the Chair will be present.
4. We will offer break-out groups for discussion; each will need both a discussion facilitator and a tech. facilitator. We don't know how many residents will attend, so we will try to get extra facilitators.
5. Chat will be directed only to the facilitators, to ensure no personal attacks.
6. Individual feedback will be provided by requesting each person fill out a Google form with any comments at the end of the meeting.

WHEN

- Len and Juli will discuss with Steve DeCoursey about:

- date to end public input to give map-makers time to review input and then to agree to adjust maps as necessary (9/30?)
- to learn if Select Board wants to hold their own separate hearing
- to confirm their final decision date (currently 10/25.)

- Proposed forum date 9/22; backup date 9/20, at 7:00 pm.

- Open House at Town Hall conference room – 9/23, from (?):00 – 7:00

- Patti will work with the group to send out invitations as soon as dates and links are set.

Next meeting for outreach team: Sept. 8 at 4:30pm to plan forum. Juli will send Zoom link.